

YEO1-05

Charting the Course

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK®

Yeomanry Regional Adventure

Version 1

by August Hahn

The nations of the Yeomanry and Keoland have been divided for years by differing ideologies and past indiscretions. Now, a chance for a renewed relationship exists. But does anyone on either side really want this to happen? What does it take to chart a course through hostile political waters?

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This is an RPGA® Network scenario for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this scenario, but the actual playing time will be closer to three hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

Preparation

First you should print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before you run your game. Be sure to familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It is also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least four players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. As well, you cannot have more than seven players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rule books during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the

players will be in gray boxes. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Scoring

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

- **No-vote scoring:** The players write their names and RPGA numbers on the scoring packet grid. You fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
- **Partial scoring:** The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the event coordinator wants information on how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
- **Voting:** Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the "best" amongst the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a Living™ adventure, it is expected that players will bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, a character sheet, and a LIVING GREYHAWK log sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer.

LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK campaigns, this adventure is tiered. Basically, the challenges in this adventure are proportioned to the average character level of the characters participating in the adventure. To determine the tier that you will use to run this adventure, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any cohorts or animals according to the values on their certificates. Cross-reference the total and the number of players participating in the game using the chart below to determine the tier used for this adventure.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 th

The level cap indicated is the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

Is it a Full Moon?

Since the hazards of lycanthropy are a current part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign, it may be necessary to determine if this adventure takes place during a full moon. For game purposes, the full moon lasts three days of each month. For a given scenario that does not state the phase of the moon, roll 1d10 before play begins. On a result of 1, the first day of the scenario is a night of the full moon (roll 1d3 to determine where in the sequence of three nights it falls).

Lifestyle

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

Destitute: You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor

quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.

Poor: You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.

Common: You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.

High: You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.

Luxury: You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle	Cost	Skill Modifier
Destitute	14 sp	-2
Poor	43 sp	-1
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1
Luxury	500 gp	+2

Adventure Background

For years now, trouble has been brewing between the nations of the Yeomanry and Keoland. Bold moves on the Yeomanry's contested northern border have set alight already smoldering politics. Though nominally allied, things could change quickly for the two countries unless a peace can be negotiated and grievances dealt with.

Keoland has offered for a representative from the Yeomanry to take back up the seat it once held in the Keoish governing body of nobles. Unfortunately, this overture is received by the Freeholder and the Council of Grosspokesmen in the Yeomanry as a prelude to their country becoming little more than a vassal state of Keoland again.

Still, the nations are not at war and relations over the last century have been pleasant if guarded. Thus, it is decided that an ambassador, chosen by the Freeholder and ratified by majority vote in the Council of Grosspokesmen, would be sent to Keoland to discuss the offer of representation.

Seen by many as an acceptance of the Keoish proposal, this ambassadorship has been met with mixed emotions in both countries. Few in the Yeomanry wish to return to the politics of old, and many of the Keoish Lords feel threatened by what could become the single largest 'landed' seat among them.

To make matters worse, there are outside interests with a strong desire to keep this 'alliance' from occurring. From secret enclaves in the darkest parts of Keoland to the fascist seats of power in the Scarlet Brotherhood to the old and powerful in the Yeomanry who don't want to see things change, forces are moving to destroy this union before it begins again.

Stephon Kelven, the chosen ambassador, and his escort began their journey to Keoland in Loftwick several days ago. In the time it has taken them to get to Fort Baxter, they have seen little sign of trouble. A peaceful protest in Emberton, organized by the landholders and Mayor, urged Ambassador Kelven to reconsider his journey. Undaunted, he continued on to the fort.

From Fort Baxter, the route ahead involves continuing through to Longspear and from there across the Javan River into Keoland. The majority of his escort, seen by Kelven as a militant statement that might be disruptive to the peace he wishes to engender, has been ordered to remain behind.

Kelven, however, is no fool. He expects there to be trouble from here on out. Along with the Freeknight Aelfric Aelfstead, he seeks out a small band to accompany him the rest of the way. He would trust to the protection of his friend alone, but having several others with him, each drawn from different ways of life, makes a statement he does wish to show Keoland – even as it stresses the individual, the Yeomanry acts with singular purpose.

Once his entourage is assembled, Kelven is ready to leave. A guide from Keoland awaits him and his party in Longspear, as does danger and intrigue. All part of the game when you are "Charting the Course" of international politics....

DM's Background

Nothing is ever as simple as it appears, even in politics. The Ambassador was chosen on many levels and for many reasons. One, Stephon is a superlative diplomat and very charming. Two, his grasp of the history and politics of both nations is unparalleled. Three, he has no immediate family or obligations in the Yeomanry and is thus free to travel without fear or worry. Four, he is of Suel

extraction, and the ruling class of Keoland are all Suel.

Most important, though, is the fifth reason. Stephon is of the Kelven family, a clan with a long and distinguished history. Their foremost footnote in the pages of Yeomanry lore comes during the era of the separation from Keoland. Aleksei Kelven, then a Free Captain of Battles in the Yeoman Army, was the man who gave the general order for the withdrawal of Yeoman forces from Keoland in 361 CY. In the eyes of many historians, it is the Kelven name that appears most frequently in this era.

Thus, choosing a Kelven for this post is yet another statement from the Council of Common Grosspokesmen to Keoland and her king. By sending the descendant of the man many Keoish see as the instigator of the Yeoman "rebellion", the Freeholder hopes to both bring about some closure to the past and make certain the King of Keoland never forgets that past.

Stephon Kelven also has a hidden agenda, one known only to the Freeholder, Marius Lindon. He has been given strict instructions from the Freeholder that his journey to Keoland is little more than a courtesy, and he will deliver the Yeomanry's polite but firm refusal of Keoland's offer. He knows this will likely not sit well with them, but such is the decision of the Freeholder. As elected head of the Yeomanry, the Freeholder has full authority to conduct diplomacy and negotiate treaties—the Council eventually has to ratify them, but the Freeholder makes them.

The Freeholder feels that keeping his end goal secret is crucial to the effectiveness of this refusal. Keoland must feel as if there is some chance of reconciliation with the Yeomanry and then be disappointed by Kelven's denial of the Seat. Only if this occurs can the rest of his mission be effective. This way, the powers that be in Keoland can see that the Yeomanry is a capable, sovereign nation unafraid to make its own policy, yet willing to discuss the future.

The Yeomanry does seek to reconcile the past and move on with good relations, but they must do it as an independent nation. Thus, once Kelven delivers the Council's decision to the assembled Lords, he has a counteroffer to propose. This counteroffer is one of mutual diplomacy; an ambassadorship from each nation to the other, with himself as Yeoman Advisor to the King of Keoland and a member of their choice as the reciprocal representative to the Council back home.

Politically speaking, this is revolutionary and unprecedented in the history of the Flanaess. Then again, so is the Yeomanry....

As DM of this module, it is crucial for you to understand and keep in mind all of the power blocs for and against Kelven's mission. This module only concerns itself directly with a few of them, but you should keep in mind (and hopefully keep the players mindful of) all of

them. Two nations and several outside groups are all focused on this singular event.

First, the Yeomanry, the only democratic nation in the Flanaess, has some radical political policies. The idea of mutual embassies of this sort is a new one, however, even for them. Not all of the Grosspokesmen will be for this idea when they hear of it, feeling that if Keoland even so much as lands an ambassador near them, imperial conquest is not far behind.

Additionally, the true goal of Kelven is not known to the Yeoman people. As far as the folk of the Yeomanry are concerned, Stephon may be traveling to Keoland with the sole purpose of surrendering their autonomy to the monarchy that overshadowed them generations ago. This does not please them at all, commoner and landowner alike.

The going through the Yeomanry will not be smooth, as people are not afraid in this 'democracy' to make their opinions known.

Second, Keoland, in the days of Tavish's rule, was an imperialist state. When the Yeomanry pulled away from them, it was not well received. Some bloodshed occurred and the entire time is remembered with some bitterness.

Now, the Monarchy has lessened in its conquering attitude and those who rule now are more open to the idea of a softer hand. Even so, the Yeomanry was a very productive member of the Keoish Empire. Many in positions of authority want it back—badly.

Just as many do not. Minor lords whose fortunes were made when Keoland lost the wealth and resources of the Yeomanry feel threatened by the possibility of that affluent and self-sufficient nation returning to the fold. So too are those lords with a weak grip on what power they do wield in Niole Dra, the capitol of Keoland.

More vehemently against the return are those small houses without the pull to even get seats in Niole Dra. They see the possibility of any state getting a say in the House of Lords, especially a rebellious and uncouth one like the Yeomanry, as an offensive slap in the face.

The going through Keoland will not be smooth, as the people in the shadows of this 'empire' are not afraid to act through agents and assassins.

The Dreadwood is also concerned about this alliance. The creatures that live there have been content with not having to worry about attack from the Keoish, who largely have taken the standpoint of "let sleeping evils lie" as far as the Dreadwood is concerned. The Yeomen raid over into that area fairly consistently, and would certainly urge more concerted effort against the creatures that dwell there if they had a voice among the Keoish. These 'aberrations' have gotten word of the possible union between Keoland and the Yeomanry and the thought of this combined might makes them rightly concerned.

One of the powerful amongst the aberrations, a mysterious female named Shethla the Scaled, Thane of the Unknown Ones, has moved to stop this joining before it can begin. Any movement between the countries is likely to occur along the path near the Dreadwood. She has vowed to intercept any humans foolish enough to pass so close.

Shethla is not the only power in the Dreadwood concerned with this 'union', but the others are content to see how she handles the task first. If she succeeds, the problem is solved. If she fails, they can move in to solve the matter and embarrass her in the eyes of the others.

The going near the Dreadwood will not be smooth, as these creatures are driven to murderous frenzy by those not afraid to appease their dark gods, 'Those Who Hunger'.

That is a brief overview of the situation. For the most part, the adventure as written will walk you through the events of this historic journey. You should keep in mind the power groups of the area in case the party deviates from the prescribed path. There are many ways to get to Niole Dra. They are all fraught with danger....

Adventure Synopsis

The party gathers for the first time in answer to a summons from Fort Baxter. In exchange for fresh supplies and a room for the night, the Commander of the Fort asks them to listen to a proposal from a guest.

This guest, Stephon Kelven, asks the PCs to accompany him on a journey to Niole Dra in the country of Keoland. If asked, he reveals the purpose of this trip: an ambassadorial junket to discuss the possible acceptance of a place in the House of Lords.

Once the PCs agree, they are given clothes befitting a diplomatic entourage. So garbed, the party commences to travel overland to Longspear. Along the way, they are met by an angry mob in the Little Hills.

While combat may occur, Kelven tries to reason with the group, asking them to keep faith with the wisdom of the Freeholder. It may take an impassioned second by the PCs for this to work. Without aid, the ambassador's plea could fall on deaf ears and a needless fight is inevitable.

Assuming Kelven survives the assault, the party arrives in Longspear. There, Kelven provides rooms and food at an excellent inn while he prepares to meet the envoys from Keoland.

This meeting is a good opportunity for role-playing as the envoys have their own ideas about a proper escort and try to convince Kelven to let them take him the rest of the way alone. As long as the party has not been disruptive and rude, Kelven refuses the kind offer and keeps them with him. Aelfric Aelfstead, Kelven's friend and Freeknight bodyguard, agrees to this.

The journey from here takes the party across the river and down a sharp turn southeast toward a pass in the hills. This brings them near the Dreadwood and an ambush. Several vicious humanoids wait for them. This combat is mostly unavoidable, the humanoids are impossible to reason with.

If the fight goes well, the envoys from Keoland urge the party to make haste to the pass and away from the woods. A northeast road promises easy travel the rest of the way through the interior of the country.

It is a promise soon broken. At a rest house along the way, the staff and guests all turn on the travelers, targeting Kelven, the Keoish envoys as "simpering sympathizers," and attempting to kill the PCs. Without their aid, Kelven would fall to these assassins' blades. With their aid, it is still likely to be a difficult fight.

Clear of the unsuccessful attempt on his life, Kelven urges what is left of his escort onward despite the wounds he has suffered. One last challenge lies between them and Niole Dra, however. A hired duelist challenges Kelven to a battle of honor and stands his ground until it is accepted. Aelfric would accept this challenge, but his code as a Freeknight will not allow him to engage in this base form of combat. Only duels with another knight are allowed at his station. One of the PCs can fight for him as champion by Yeomanry law and Kelven accepts if this is offered.

The duelist is not easily dispatched, but doing so earns the PC who does so some respect in the eyes of Kelven and his Freeknight companion. The road finally cleared, the group can reach their destination at last. Niole Dra greets the party with a spectacle of parade and festivity. On the morrow, Kelven will speak to the assembled Lords of Keoland but for this night, enjoyment is the task at hand.

The morrow comes, as it always does. Garbed in their gifted finery, the PCs and Aelfric spend a tense time guarding the ambassador as he gives his speech. Needless to say, his refusal of the Seat comes as quite a shock. So too does his counteroffer. The House recesses to consider what Kelven has said.

From here, only the inscrutable politics of Keoland can say for certain what happens next. For now, however, the PCs' task is done. They have delivered Kelven into the lion's den and lived to tell of it....

Note: This is part one of a two-part scenario, as noted on the Title Page. It might be best for story continuity to ensure that the accompanying adventure, "Fleeing the Scene," is available before beginning play. The second part is not necessary for play, as suggestions exist at the conclusion of this scenario for continuance without it. It is, however, recommended.

Encounter 1: Learning the Land

Scene One: A Survey Begun

The purpose of this scene is to get the players together, and allow them get comfortable with the setting (Fort Baxter) and with each other. The boxed text below is one way of letting them know what they need to, but feel free to paraphrase and add bits of local color (such as a soldier bringing the party water and asking a few questions about each of them in an officious way).

It's as cool an evening here in Fort Baxter as Yeoman nights ever get. The huge stone walls and the great twin towers that overlook them stretch up into the night, white and red pennants fluttering in the breeze.

It's been a day since most of you arrived, and you've been treated fairly well. This place is a military installation, not a townside inn, but the accommodations have been pleasant and the food passable. All told, you've been comfortable, and have had time to marvel at the great stone fortress the Yeomen refer to diminutively as a "fort".

The job offer that brought you here sounds intriguing enough. 'Escorts needed east to the Javan; possibly beyond. Professionals preferred, experience appreciated. Report to Fort Baxter and await further word.' In that regard, you've come here and done exactly that, awaited.

Apparently, the person you are here to meet has only just arrived and will send for you shortly. Others who must have seen the same handbill are here with you in the commons hall of the barracks. As the lantern's glow falls over their faces, you might have just enough time for introductions...

Pause here and let players meet each other and introduce their characters. Spontaneous role-play might begin at this point. Let it proceed for a couple of minutes, then move to the next section.

A soldier in plated leathers comes in and gestures to the lot of you. "Come with me", he instructs as he ducks back out the door.

Beyond, the courtyard of the Fort is lined with soldiers in formation. Between them stands a trio of men. One is a tall human with a full growth beard and black hair. You recognize him as Captain Hrothgar, the commander of Fort Baxter. He was the one whom assigned you to the barracks and made sure your needs were met. Efficient to a fault, he's not been available much for conversation nor seemed much in the mood for it.

Beside him, an elf in finely articulated plate armor stands at parade rest. His helm off and tucked under one arm, the elf's pale hair is meticulously groomed and braided back. Slightly pointed ears rise above his white curls. The tabard and cloak he wears, one white, the other red, speaks of his station eloquently: that of a Freeknight.

Next to him, the third man nods jovially to you as you approach. A friendly looking human in his late thirties, this fellow seems less physical than the other two, though not softly so. A sword adorns his hip and does not look to have rested there unused.

Hrothgar speaks as you near the group. "This here is the man you've come to see. Ambassador Kelven, these are the folk who came about your inquiry." With that, he gestures to the third man, then to you all. The elf steps back out of the way and lets Kelven come closer.

"A pleasure to meet you all. I am Stephon Kelven, and as the good Captain said, I am an ambassador appointed by the Council. How might you be?" His hand extends in friendship as he studies you all.

Again, let the players role-play this meeting as much as they wish. From this moment on, Kelven will be making his determinations about their suitability for the mission ahead.

Low Charisma scores will be off-putting to him at first, but in the interests of being fair, he will let actions speak much louder than appearances.

After introductions are out of the way, Stephon will turn and say,

"This is Aelfric Aelfstead, a life-long friend and my companion on this journey. The men you see around you have brought me all the way from Loftwick with little incident."

The Freeknight bows to you. "A pleasure", he says quietly, not wishing to interrupt the ambassador.

"I am looking for honest folk to ride with me as far as Longspear. I am meeting an entourage from the country of Keoland there. We are going to discuss their offer of granting the Yeomanry a seat once more in their House of Lords."

Watch the players as he says this last part. Allow anyone who wishes to interject with opinions about the Keoish to do so. Then:

After pausing a moment to gauge your reactions, he continues. "I would like to retain your services for at least the journey to Longspear. I have the resources of this good Fort and my own finances to draw on for your fee. I can offer each of you 50 gold for your time with a bonus should we see heavy resistance... which I do not expect."

Anyone who wishes to do may refuse payment at this time. Aelfric will nod approvingly at those who do so, but will not look askance at those who do not.

Any PC who is a member of the Yeomanry Militia will be tapped by Hrothgar and informed that he or she has been activated for this task. (This means the PC will not receive any compensation from Kelven for the mission, but will be not have to spend the normal TU cost of this adventure.)

Kelven can be bargained with, but his price is firm. If asked for it, he can offer basic equipment (Goods, Simple or Martial Weapons, and Light or Medium Armor) worth up to 50 gold per PC as an additional incentive. (**Note:** Asking for more than what was originally offered will gain the initial disfavor of the Freeknight, though this opinion can be swayed by noble actions later.)

Once a price is arranged, Kelven will give one last boon to those who accept his task.

"We will be meeting with diplomats in Longspear. I would prefer that those who are with me look the part of suitable escorts. As such, I will have the tailors here fashion each of you suitable garb. We'll end the eve with fittings, then I'll let you go and get some sleep. We'll leave out no later than noon on the morrow."

He nods to each of you. "Well met, all. It will be a pleasure working with you. Rest well." The Freeknight with him echoes the sentiment as Hrothgar barks orders for the soldiers nearby to return to work.

"Look alive, men! Parade's over! We've a fort to guard!!!" As the bear of a man tears into his men, the soldier that brought you out here returns you to your room....

The rest of this scene takes place without the benefit of boxed text. If the PCs have bargained for equipment, you can role-play them getting it if you wish.

You should at least skim the fittings that occur before bedtime, allowing the players to request colors, fabrics, and styles (within reason). Kelven wants to make a good statement to the Keoish about his entourage; thus, the clothes will be tasteful and well made. Other than that, let the player's preferences determine what their PCs receive.

Keep in mind that a lot of action is still to come and that the combats will be somewhat time intensive. Be sure to leave this scene before too much time (more than about twenty minutes) has passed.

Scene Two: Sighting Landmarks

Morning comes early and it brings with it breakfast. Stephon sends attendants to you all after the meal and insists on good grooming. Baths and haircuts become the order of the day.

Once the whirlwind of personal care subsides, you are brought to the tailor's office and made to stand through a final hemming. Your clothes are ready and apparently meet Kelven's tastes. Given a nod of approval, you've been accepted into his company.

With noon looming, you gather in the courtyard of the fort and prepare to receive leave from Captain Hrothgar to depart.

Those without horses are loaned steeds from Fort Baxter's stables. While not the finest of horses by

anyone's imagination, they are good quality riding horses or light warhorses (PCs' choice, but only one light warhorse can be spared; any more must be riding horses). The steeds are to be returned to a Yeoman installation after the journey is done.

Once outfitted, the Fort's commander makes another appearance. He moves to the gates, gestures for the party to advance, and orders the great doors opened.

"A swing of the arm there, men! Let's get these folk underway! Heave that wheel. Heave!"

Hrothgar's men serve with steady devotion and quick compliance, which should be stressed to PCs as the fort's personnel snap to attention and get them on their way quickly.

Note: The PCs may want to make plans for exactly how they wish to escort. This might include sending an observant person forward to scout the road or some other method of trailblazing. If they do, the following encounters will have to be modified accordingly. Never feel the boxed text is carved in stone; you can certainly change things to reflect the actions of the PCs. In fact, you should do so whenever possible.

The minutes since leaving Fort Baxter have become hours now. The noonday sun has made its fiery trek westward as the miles pass beneath the hooves of your fine mounts. Kelven's coach, a solid and well-maintained affair of walnut, brass, and darkened steel, makes good time with its paired Yeomanry striders providing power.

Aelfric Aelfstead, who for most of the day has ridden along the left side of the ambassador's coach, now eases his mount's reins and moves back to speak with you.

"Hail. A word with you if I might."

Aelfric is concerned with how discipline and combat efficiency will be affected by the inclusion of the PCs in Kelven's mission. He will spend a time here talking with them, trying to gauge their abilities and honor.

Any paladins will immediately receive an approving smile, while rogues (who act the part) will get a wide berth and distrusting tolerance. Aelfric has an appreciation for wizards, so he will not act with any hostility toward them unless they give him reason too.

After discussing tactics with the party for a bit, have those who are not active in the discussion (if any) roll a Listen Check (DC 15). Those who make it will get:

You think you hear a faint sound, almost that of conversation. It seems to be coming from past the next rise, not more than fifty yards away.

If no one makes the check, or if no one warns enough of the group for the horses to appreciably

slow down, continue with the next section. Otherwise, even advancing cautiously will evade the upcoming trap. Describe accordingly.

As the carriage and you top the next hill, the driver of the ambassador's coach gives the reins a sharp pull and cries out in surprise. His team pulls up in front of a pile of spiked tree trunks stacked across the road. Unfortunately, the horses do not do so before taking some damage. Crying out in pain, both steeds now bleed along their forelegs.

"What is the meaning of this?," Aelfric yells out. As if in answer, men move in from either side of the path. Most are armed with staves or cudgels, but one brandishes a spear.

If PCs rush to act at this moment, let them. The ambushing group would rather talk, but actions from the party might instigate a combat. Any combat essentially skips the action straight to Scene 2b, but without Stephon getting injured first. If the PCs remain calm, continue with the next bit of text.

If the PCs ask, describe the assailants as ordinary looking humans in linen and leather, wielding clubs. A Sense Motive Check at DC 20 will let the PC know that these people are obviously angry, but also nervous and afraid. They honestly do not wish to fight.

If allowed to do so, Aelfric says:

"We don't want to fight!," one of the men in the lead calls out to you. "But we can't let you through!"

"Move aside, folk! We come by order of the Freeholder!" Aelfric yells back. "Let us pass!"

Again, let the PCs act if they wish to, skipping to 2b if you need to. Kelven will be ducking out of the wagon in a few seconds to talk, but if the PCs can negotiate things peacefully, so much the better. Of course, they may opt to start a fight too. Let them.

If the PCs stay calm, Kelven says:

"Good people, stand down. It's not your intent to fight, nor ours to give you one. Trust the Freeholder to know his business and me to perform as he wills."

He steps out of the coach and within weapon's reach of your ambushers. "If we cannot have your trust to do what's right, then do what you will."

It does not look like Stephon is going to defend himself at all...

Aelfric, inwardly furious now, will not move to block or attack any of the farmers. This is Stephon's mission and he has to fulfill it as he sees fit. Any PC studying Aelfric will easily see that he is not happy with what his friend is doing.

Make a Diplomacy Check for Stephon (Charisma 16, 8 ranks in the skill, and Skill Focus make for a +13 to the roll) against a DC of 20.

The PCs can affect this roll. If they have remained peaceful and speak on Kelven's behalf, treat any such attempt as a cooperative skill check attempt (DC 10) to the ambassador that would add +2 to his roll. As many PCs as wish to aid Stephon can make this check. If Kelven is successful, move to Scene 2a. If the roll fails, go to Scene 2b.

Scene 2a: Calm Going

The townsfolk, and that's honestly what they seem to be - just agitated townsfolk - back away from the unarmed man and look down in shame. One of them, the one speaking before, says, "It's not that, your lordship... It's just that we heard..."

Kelven raises a hand and smiles. "No, not your lordship. I'm a Citizen, like many of you, I suspect. I serve the Yeomanry, same as you, and I do the will of the people. You just have to trust me to that."

The assembly breaks up around him, folk muttering under their breath about "being foolish" and "what were we thinking". Two large farmhands move to clear the tree trunks out of the road.

Stephon looks up at you and smiles. "These good folk mean no harm. We can ride on now, I think, as soon as we have a look at my horses."

Aelfric leaps down from the saddle to do just that, welcoming any aid you might give.

Any druid or PC succeeding at a Heal check (DC 10) can tell that the horses' wounds are superficial. Once taken care of, they are more than fit to get underway again.

Kelven pauses one last time to wave to the departing townsfolk. He tells Aelfric that the people are probably from Haldale, a town nearby mostly under the control of a particularly reactionary landowner. "Man was once a Speaker, and he hasn't ever stopped doing it."

Aelfric nods sagely. "If you're content to let this go, I am. Let's ride."

The ambassador gestures for you to mount up and follow. "Thanks for the cool heads, all. A fight would have only cost needless lives. I am glad to see I chose well." Then, he climbs into the coach and you are all under way once more.

Scene 2b: Rough Seas

This scene can occur if Kelven fails his Diplomacy check or if the PCs instigate a combat with the townsfolk. Read the boxed text below only if the former has occurred. Otherwise, simply run the combat as outlined below.

A tense moment passes, as the ambassador's words seem to sway the emotions of the crowd. A few even lower their angry weapons and back away.

"Bullocks to that!", yells the one in the lead suddenly. "You'll not be handing us back to the royals if I get a say-so!" Then, just as suddenly, he lashes out with the shaft of his spear and catches Kelven across the brow.

"Damn!" Aelfric shouts and a mace comes free of his belt. "So much for talk!" With a forceful spur, his steed leaps forward and the Freeknight enters the fray.

Around where Kelven fell, men descend to vent their anger on his unconscious form. As the thundering Freeknight approaches, they scurry back and prepare to nervously meet his charge.

Combat begins at this point unless the PCs preempted it earlier. The townsfolk are a mix of soldiers and commoners, led by a fighter under the employ of an ex-Speaker named Dalton Hroda. The fighter, Ailen Porter, is incensed by the thought of Keoland regaining control of the Yeomanry and is willing to kill if he must to prevent it. The rest of his 'men' aren't so dedicated, but they are here to preserve their way of life from the possibility of imperial rule.

Thus, if two of the commoners or soldiers fall in this battle, the rest will try to run. Ailen will not rout, no matter the odds. He can be subdued, however.

Aelfric the Freeknight will be fighting to subdue the whole time, his code not permitting him to draw deadly steel on this unarmed people. He will also call out during battle:

"These folk are naught but an angry mob! Try if you can not to kill them!"

Olin, the carriage driver, is no warrior and will immediately bail out from his seat and take cover in the carriage.

Tier 1 (EL 4)

Ailen Porter, human male Ftr 1: CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 1d10+5; hp 15; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather armor); Atks +3 melee, (1d8+1/x3, shortspear); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1.

Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +1, Jump +1, Ride +2, Swim +2, Wilderness Lore +1; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (Shortspear), Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Equipment: Shortspear, studded leather.

Farmers, mix male and female humans, War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium-sized Humans; HD 1d8+5; hp 13 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee, (1d6+2, club); SA none; SQ none, AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +1, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +1, Swim +2; **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Toughness.
Equipment: Clubs, Leather Armor.

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Ailen Porter, human male Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 4d10+11; hp 39; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atks +6 melee, (1d8+3/x3, shortspear +6); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +3.

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +2, Ride +4, Swim +2, Wilderness Lore +2; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (shortspear), Imp. Initiative, Toughness, Iron Will, Dodge, Weapon Specialization (shortspear).

Equipment: Shortspear, Studded Leather.

Farmers, mix male and female human War1 (8): CR 1; Medium-sized Humans; HD 1d8+5; hp 13 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee, (1d6+2, club); SA none; SQ none, AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +1, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +1, Swim +2; **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Toughness

Equipment: Clubs, leather armor.

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Ailen Porter, human male Ftr5: CR 5; Medium-sized Human; HD 5d10+13; hp 47; Init +7 (Dex + Feat); Spd 30'; AC 15(16) (+3 Dex, +3 Studded, (+ Feat)); Atks +7 melee, (1d8+3/x3, shortspear); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +3.

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +3, Ride +5, Swim +2, Wilderness Lore +2; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (shortspear), Improved Initiative, Toughness, Iron Will, Dodge, Weapon Specialization (shortspear).

Equipment: Shortspear, Studded Leather

Farmers, mix male and female humans, War1 (10): CR 1; Medium-sized Humans; HD 1d8+5; hp 13 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee, (1d6+2, club); SA none; SQ none, AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +1, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +1, Swim +2; **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Toughness.

Equipment: Clubs, Leather Armor.

When the group has routed, some kind of peace can be achieved, or if Porter falls, the battle ends. Those remaining surrender, throw down their arms, and ask for mercy from the furious Freeknight.

Aelfric will call out to learn the state of Stephon. The ambassador is unconscious, having been caught wide open by Ailen's blow. He can be helped with any form of healing and will regain consciousness soon.

When Aelfric learns of Stephon's recovery, he will angrily order the survivors to gather the fallen and return to their homes. Once this is done (the townsfolk rush to comply), he will return to his friend.

Stephon stands painfully. He looks up at his mailed friend and smiles. "You certainly put the fear of the law into them, didn't you?"

The Freeknight sighs heavily. "Better than you did, I'm afraid." He gazes after the fleeing people and shakes his head. "I should go and demand they all be arrested for assault."

Stephon moves toward his wagon, also shaking his head. "No time, my friend. Besides, they are just upset and afraid. Not of you, but of change. Let them go. Please."

The Freeknight returns to the side of the coach. "As you bid. This is your mission." He looks back at the ambushers and his eyes narrow. "I won't pursue it... this time."

Stephon looks to the rest of you. "We'd better get going. I think they are running home to lick their wounds. Let's not be here if they decide to return with an even bigger mob."

The driver returns from the safety of the coach's interior and climbs up to take the reins. As Kelven's coach lurches forward to head back down the road, Aelfric murmurs, "Yes. For their sake, let's not be here."

As always, any of the above text can be interrupted or changed by PC actions. Adjust accordingly, keeping in mind the personalities involved and the actions taken.

Once people are satisfied that this encounter is at an end, come on to Scene Three.

Scene Three: Seeking Shelter

The purpose of this scene is to allow interaction between the players and the NPCs. The boxed text below provides a scene for making camp. After that, the action of the scene is entirely dependent on you and the players. If they seem content to rest and move on, don't force them to interact; simply make the option available to those who wish to take it.

Night has fallen, the setting sun finally consumed by the western hills. Enough light remains in the lingering dusk for you to seek a place to make camp. Aelfric has been on guard since the run-in with those townsfolk and has not relaxed in the slightest.

Nearby, an overhang of shale seems to offer the best opportunity to bed down. Kelven has his driver guide the carriage close while your group and Aelfric scout the rise.

All seems safe, and within twenty minutes a fire burns, tents are unpacked, and the horses are hitched to a scrub tree.

As Olin, the driver, tends to the steeds, Kelven invites you to share the warmth of the

campfire and talk. "Tell me a bit about yourselves. The interview at Fort Baxter was, by necessity, a bit stiff. I'd like to get to know you better."

As he speaks, he slips a flask of something potent from his jacket. Sipping slowly, he smiles and offers it around. "So who's first?"

This scene can last as long as you like, keeping the total time of the adventure in mind. You should not be more than an hour into the game when you move on to Chapter Two, but close to that will be fine.

Watches can be posted as the PCs like, but nothing comes to bother the camp. For local flavor, you might wish to have a few tyrg (wolf-like predators that roam the Little Hills) howls in the distance...

When everyone is ready, proceed with Chapter Two, The First Port of Call.

Encounter 2: The First Port of Call

Scene One: Short Ride, Long Spear

Begin this scene with a description of another long day's travel. The road between Fort Baxter and Longspear is a lengthy one but it is fairly easy to travel. Save for the hills, nothing much exists to slow down the party's progress.

Nothing attacks them and no signs of further ambush show themselves, though PCs that stay on guard for such things will earn some respect from Aelfric and Stephon. Once the second night of camping is done, the group leaves out for a third day's journey.

Before noon, they will reach Longspear. One of the Yeomanry's largest cities, Longspear rests on the western side of the Javan River. This is where Kelven is to meet the envoys from Keoland.

As the walls and towers of Longspear come into view, the ambassador bids you all ride closer to his coach. "Time for you to learn a bit more of my mission, good sirs and ladies. In yonder city, I am to meet a pair of men from the country beyond, Keoland."

He takes a breath, glances toward the city, and continues. "They are to help me complete my journey by escorting me all the way to Niole Dra and the House of Lords. I thank you for the safe conduct you have shown me thus far."

Allow time for a bit of conversation here. If asked questions about his mission, let common sense guide your answers. He will not reveal the fact that he is going all the way to Niole Dra just to refuse the Crown's offer, nor will he reveal his counterproposal. Other than that, he will gladly discuss the mission.

He will not directly say that he is going to accept the offer. Question in that regard will receive,

"The Freeholder decided that I should go to meet with the Lords of Keoland. I simply exercise his will in this matter."

While this may not be a satisfactory answer, it is all he will give. Insisting on something more will not make Kelven think favorably of them. Aelfric, if questioned, will honestly claim ignorance as to the ambassador's message. Once the conversation draws to a close, continue the scene.

You reach the tall walls of Longspear proper and go through the formal call and answer of the guard. A runner takes the ambassador's writ and the gates open before you. Aelfric rides ahead, causing many a head to turn and gaining much respect for your group. Whispers line the streets as you pass from the outer run to the inner causeway.

"We'll split up for now," the ambassador tells you. "Aelfric will ride with me to survey the meeting place while you secure us shelter over there. I intend to watch and rest before seeing the Keoish envoys." With that, he points to a fine looking inn called 'The Festive Granger'.

The coach rides on, leaving you about your task.

The difference in setting from the open overland travel and the cluttered closed-in streets of Longspear should be stressed in this scene.

The walls of this city were built early in its history and much of the room within them has been used to its fullest extent. This makes for tall, narrow buildings and tangled streets barely wide enough for a carriage and full team in places. Still, the general spirit of cooperation that exists in the Yeomanry pervades this place too, turning what could easily become a squalid cramped city into a bustling hive of efficient, if overly cozy, citizens.

As it is likely (unless the PCs have somehow delayed the mission) not quite noon, the next scene takes place at lunchtime. Be sure to note the press of people as the party (perhaps) makes their way to the inn and tries to comply with Kelven's orders.

Scene Two: A Rest Before Leaving

The double doors of The Festive Granger swing open as you approach, discharging a group of strong looking men in the livery of the Longspear City Guard. They nod in a friendly fashion at you and head back toward the main gate.

Inside, the Granger is decked out in decent oak furniture and the air is scented with grouse and ale fumes. Sounds all around reveal a throng of folk in the place's booths and tables, all enjoying a midday's repast before returning to their tasks.

A woman whirls away from a busy table and nearly runs into the lot of you. "Oh, my pardon. Can I get you anything?"

This leads into the purpose of this scene. Prices for common goods and foods as per the PHB hold true for the Granger. Ale, wine, water, and milk are all available, as are normal breadstuffs and stews.

Stables exist beside the Granger and each person gets a room and a stall for one night. Kelven is footing the bill for the PCs. The PCs will not have too much time to sightsee before Stephon and Aelfric return. Depending on who is still downstairs, read the following to them.

Stephon looks around as he follows Aelfric in through the Granger's doors. Many of the folk here grow silent as they enter, but conversation quickly resumes albeit with a new topic or two.

The pair makes their way to you and sits down. Kelven inquires about the rooms as his escort keeps a watchful eye out for trouble.

"The diplomats from Keoland have been here two days and are looking forward to our meeting this eve. I think we can safely say that thus far, your services to me have been excellent."

This is where Kelven will make his first judgement call about the party. If they have been polite, levelheaded, and haven't proven violent or coarse, he will continue with the offer below. Otherwise, he will thank the party again and discharge them of their service to him. Pay will be given as agreed upon, but the mission ends here for them. (Proceed to the Achievement Summary and thank the players for their participation.)

Kelven may "cherry-pick" which PCs he wants to accompany him at this point. Any PCs that have been particularly disruptive, impolite, violent, or would otherwise cause Kelven to not want them along on a delicate diplomatic mission will be excused with the remainder proceeding. At this point, recalculate the tier level for purposes of subsequent encounters.

Do not "have mercy" at this point—if PCs have been unable to conduct themselves with a minimum of decorum, they are out of the remainder of the scenario.

For PCs are still in Kelven's employ, continue:

"I'd be honored if you would stay with me for the extent of my meeting with these gentles. I would feel safer with good people at my back."

This said, he retires upstairs for the afternoon. He will give the PCs half of whatever price they agreed upon before leaving, telling them to enjoy their day in Longspear. He instructs them to be back here no later than dusk (around six in the evening).

The PCs may now relax at the Granger or do some exploration of the city. If they choose the second option, you will have to improvise a bit.

Normally, PCs will want to go shopping, especially if they have some fresh gold in their pockets. Most any normal item can be found in Longspear; use PHB prices where applicable.

The time limit of six hours will keep most long range touring plans under control. Remember, and remind those PCs who have any Wisdom bonus at all (Wis 12 or higher) that Kelven will likely be disappointed if anyone is late.

Let the PCs roam the big city for a while if they like. You can describe the wharf if they go near the river, the town square, and the statues of noble Yeoman soldiers that grace the fountains throughout the city. Once they get a feel for the place, they will likely return for a meal and to freshen up.

Promptly at dusk, Kelven will be ready to leave. He will wait thirty minutes if he must for late PCs, but it will not please him to do so. Any later than that and he will leave them behind. From here, proceed to Scene Three, dealing with tardy PCs as you see fit.

Scene Three: Others on the Trail

This scene begins with Kelven insisting that PCs accompanying him be dressed appropriately. This means wearing the garb provided in Chapter One. He strictly refuses to have anyone not complying with this request at his side when he meets with the Keolandians.

You travel from the Festive Granger into the heart of Longspear. Here, the buildings are taller, made of stone, and have a richer appearance. The common folk you saw earlier around the Granger are rather scarce here, with more wealthy people now apparent.

Aelfric is in formal dress beside you, his armor absent in exchange for a doublet of crushed red velvet and ducked linen pants. Gone is his shield with its Yeomanry crest; replaced by a signet ring bearing the same blazon.

Kelven is finely attired as well, his ermine half-cloak neatly framing the dark colors of his rich clothes. A thin bladed dagger at his side marks the only armament he has chosen to bear.

You eventually arrive at the Longbough, one of the finest establishments in the city. Here, the elite of Longspear gathers for matters of state and property. Today, the place is less crowded than usual, and you only wait ten minutes to be seated...

Once more, be sure to allow time for role-playing while the party waits. Kelven can share only a few details about the Keolandians, as he has never seen them. If asked, he will say that the entourage should be two or three diplomats. He does not know if they will have bodyguards, but he suspects they will.

You are eventually taken to a separate room on the second floor. The waiter profusely apologizes for making Kelven wait when he had a reservation, but the ambassador smiles and waves it off.

Once you arrive, you see three men seated along one side of a round table. One rises and moves to greet your charge.

"Hail to you, Ambassador Kelven," the man says as he bows. "On behalf of the Crown, I greet you and bid you welcome to our family of nations." A smile crosses the speaker's lips.

Kelven extends his hand. "Well met, sir. I am Stephon Kelven. You?"

The man smiles again. "I am Argenel Threel. This," he says as he gestures to a shorter black-haired man beside him, "is my brother and fellow emissary Kashnel Threel."

The third man stands and approaches as well. "I am Mandaver Oshlake, of the Niole Dra Oshlakes. As leader of these envoys, I bid you greetings and invite you to join us for a meal this fine night."

Allow anyone who has said they are watching the Keolanders closely (and who can make a Sense Motive DC 15 check) to spot a look of irritation cross Argenel Threel's face when Mandaver claims to be their leader.

Kelven accepts the invitation and gestures for everyone to sit. Then, he introduces each of you as his honored guests and guardians.

"An honor, I am sure, to be present on such a historic occasion." Argenel tells you all. "You will be able to tell your children about what will soon transpire."

Kelven smiles acceptingly but adds, "Let's not speak too quickly, good sir. There is much travel and hardship to come."

"By Lydia, you tell true. I stand in arrears."

From here, run a short and pleasant meal, adding whatever details you like to make the scene more enjoyable for the players. The menu will include braised duck, small red potatoes in a butter-chive sauce, and warm leeks.

Eventually, Mandaver will say:

"So, Ambassador, have you made arrangements for your escort to stay on here once we all continue to Keoland? If not, I'd gladly offer our rooms to them. I believe we paid for another week in advance."

Kelven shakes his head almost immediately. "A kind offer, sir, but I asked them to make the rest of the journey with us. They have proven most capable."

Mandaver and his companions look genuinely surprised. "I am sure they are, sir," he replies, "but the way ahead is an easy one. We traveled here without incident."

The ambassador nods. "And by the grace of the gods, such will be our luck hereafter. Still, I feel

safer with the spear of a Freeknight at my side and these good folk for company." Then, he turns to you. "I know a week here is quite the luxury. I will not be offended if you chose to take it..."

Players have the opportunity here of bowing out of the rest of the adventure if they like. Also, if time has unfortunately run long, the game can be called here with little incident.

Of course, the scenario is only half over at this point, and a good deal of experience and gain will be missed if it ends now. Let the players decide (unless game length decides for you). Aelfric will ask them to ride with him and Kelven if the party have proven themselves honorable. Kelven will offer to pay those seeking lucre an additional 50 gp for the second leg of the trip, although this would reinforce Aelfric's low opinion of such an individual and make it even more unlikely that those characters would gain the Commendation of the Freeknights at the end of the scenario.

Once a decision is made, the Keolanders will accept it and move on to other matters. You can run some of the dialogue (mostly dry conversation about the details of the alliance that Kelven skillfully avoids) or summarize.

Eventually, the meal will end and all respective parties will return to their rooms with an agreement to meet on the morn for breakfast here.

Breakfast will be more of the same, with Mandaver making one last offer to the party, this time directly to them, for them to stay here. If refused, he takes no apparent offense (Sense Motive DC 20 will show that he is truly not offended).

The Keolanders will then meet with Kelven and the PCs at the Northbridge Gate and cross into Keoland. Anyone who is watching the Keoland diplomats can see the relief in their faces upon returning home. Anyone watching Aelfric will see his dismay at leaving his.

From here, the action continues in Chapter Three.

Encounter 3: Strangers in a Stranger Land

Once in Keoland, there are two paths of travel the group can take. The road splits and goes northwest or southeast. The eventual goal, of course, is to travel northwest to Niole Dra, but there are only two good paths through the eastern arm of the Good Hills: one at Cryllor and the other just short of the Dreadwood. Either route takes about nine days total to reach the capital, as the carriage can make about 30 miles a day on the road.

Recent events (the land annex orchestrated by the Duke of Cryllor) make Kelven wary of

nearing his domain. The diplomats from Keoland agree, as they do not wish an unfortunate incident to mar this important occasion. Thus, both Stephon and the Keolandians agree to travel through the Barony of Westgate, near the Dreadwood through the Barony of Grayhill, then the Barony of Sayre, and north through the Earldom of Linth to Niole Dra.

Do not force this upon the players, though. If they make a strong case for avoiding the Dreadwood and heading northwest instead, let them. Simply skip Scene One and describe a long route of travel near the demesne of the Duke, the March of Middlemead and the County of Nimlee. The entourage will get safe passage through Cryllor, as the Duke's goals do not include a foolish war with the Yeomanry.

If this option is taken, you may wish to include a brief description of twenty of the Duke's men escorting the party past the Good Hills and wishing them a safe journey. (See statistics for Cryllor Outriders in the appendix should the party foolishly attack these men as they approach.)

Opting to travel through Cryllor will not avoid Scene Two or Scene Three, as Two can occur at any inn and Three occurs on the King's Way leading to Niole Dra itself.

Scene One: Snakes on the Trail

Your ride through the Barony of Westgate has been a pleasant one until now. The Little Hills, always to your left, have kept the morning sun off you until nearly noon and have provided a nice windbreak in the cooler evenings.

As you begin to travel through the Good Hills near the edge of the Dreadwood, you've been on your guard. Aelfric has stayed right by the ambassador's carriage, relying on you to be watch and point guard. So far, this extra vigilance has been for naught.

The party should have a chance to detect the lurking lizardfolk. They can be spotted at 3d6x10 feet out if the party makes a Spot check with a DC of 30 (28 for Tiers 2-3 - see p.59 in the DMG for spotting rules). If the party does not detect the lizardfolk, read the following:

As you round a bend in the road that turns you past the hills and toward the east, a figure up ahead becomes visible.

Heavily cowed, it can not possibly be human as it rises to a full seven feet tall. Hefting a wickedly flanged mace, it cries out in a roaring bellow and is soon joined by several more of its kind. Unfortunately, these do not appear around it. They appear around you...

Ambush!

Sheltha's forces (Note that she is not here, nor does she appear in this adventure) include Klekssith (the one in the road) and several other lizard men who were borrowed down under the sides of the road. The lizard men will attempt to swarm the wagon and bash it in to get at the diplomats inside.

This can be a very deadly fight if the party is unlucky or disorganized. Be sure to aid them with Aelfric as much as you need to. Aelfric could likely take them all himself in open combat, but his priority is to protect the ambassador, Olin, and the Keoish envoys. Under no circumstances will he move more than thirty feet (six 5' squares if using tactical mapping and miniatures) from the wagon.

Note: Be sure to describe the creatures attacking the party as monstrosity as possible. All of the lizardfolk have been warped by their association with the dark forces of the Dreadwood. Full details on these 'forces' will be forthcoming from the Keoland Triad in future publications, but for now, warp the visage and bodies of the attackers as your imagination dictates. Snakes for arms (biting for normal claw damage), a second face on their torsos, and bizarre colors and patterns are not out of line.

Tier 1 (EL 5)

Klekssith, male lizardfolk Clr2 (1): CR 4; Medium-sized Humanoid (aquatic, reptilian); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 natural, +2 large shield); Atks +5 melee (1d8+2, heavy mace); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5.

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +2, Knowledge: Religion +4; **Feats:** Multiattack, Weapon Focus (Heavy Mace)

Granted Powers: +1 level when casting Chaos spells, Smite (one/day, +4 to hit, +2 to damage to any one melee attack)

Spells: 0th—*resistance* (cast 2 rounds before combat), *inflict minor wounds* x2, *detect magic*: 1st—*bane*, *doom*, *inflict light wounds**, *entropic shield* (cast one round before combat).

*Domain spells (Domains: Chaos, Destruction)

Equipment: Masterwork Heavy Mace, Holy Symbol (bizarre medallion depicting writhing tendrils)

Lizardfolk (4): CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoids; HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 natural); Atks 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1), bite (1d4); SA none; SQ none, AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9; **Feats:** Multiattack

Tier 2: (EL 7)

Klekssith male lizardfolk Clr4 (1): CR 5; Medium-sized Humanoid (aquatic, reptilian); HD 6d8+12; hp 40; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 natural, +2 large shield); Atks +7 melee (1d8+2, masterwork heavy mace); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6.

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +4, Knowledge: Religion +5, Spellcraft +2; **Feats:** Multiattack, Weapon Focus (heavy mace), Improved Initiative

Granted Powers: +1 level when casting Chaos spells, Smite (one/day, +4 to hit, +2 to damage to any one melee attack)

Spells: 0th—*resistance* (cast 2 rounds before combat), *inflict minor wounds* x3, *detect magic*; 1st—*bane*, *doom*, *inflict light wounds** (one is from Destruction domain), *entropic shield* (cast one round before combat), *bane*; 2nd—*shatter** (domain), *hold person* x2

*Domain spells (Domains: Chaos, Destruction)

Equipment: Masterwork heavy mace, holy symbol (bizarre medallion depicting writhing tendrils)

Lizardfolk (6): CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoids; HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 natural); Atks 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1), bite (1d4); SA none; SQ none, AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9; **Feats:** Multiattack

Tier 3 (EL 8)

Klekssith, male lizardfolk Clr5 (1): CR 5; Medium-sized Humanoid (aquatic, reptilian); HD 6d8+12; hp 40; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 natural, +2 large shield); Atks +7 heavy mace, (1d8+2, heavy mace); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6.

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +4, Knowledge: Religion +5, Spellcraft +2, Knowledge: 'Those who Sleep' +2.

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (heavy mace), Improved Initiative.

Spells: 0—*resistance* (cast 2 rounds before combat), *inflict minor wounds* x3, *detect magic*; 1st—*bane*, *doom*, *inflict light wounds**, *entropic shield* (cast one round before combat), *bane*; 2nd: *shatter**, *hold person* x2; 3rd: *contagion**, *searing light*

*Domain spells (Domains: Chaos, Destruction)

Equipment: Masterwork heavy mace, holy symbol (bizarre medallion depicting writhing tendrils)

Myrsh'Agog, male lizardfolk Ftr3: CR 4; Medium-sized Humanoid (aquatic, reptilian); HD 2d8+3d10+5; hp 40; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 natural, +2 leather); Atks +7 melee (1d10+2, greatclub); SA none; SQ none, AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1.

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9, Climb +4, Wilderness Lore +2, Intimidate +3; **Feats:** Multiattack, Weapon Focus (greatclub), Power Attack, Cleave.

Lizardfolk (7): CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoids (aquatic, reptilian); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 natural); Atks 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1), bite (1d4); SA none; SQ none, AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +4, Jump +7, Swim +9; **Feats:** Multiattack.

This battle should be enough to scare the party greatly, but not enough to kill them. Also, the ambassador and the envoys should survive. If Kelven is killed, the mission ends in failure. If any of the envoys are killed, the scenario continues unabated (though the tone becomes considerably darker when the surviving Keoish are concerned).

Scene Two: Hostile Hostiles

Two days of hard travel will place the party at a roadside hostel called the Trailbreak just outside a Keoish town called Ienolde. Resupply can be had here, with Kelven handling the costs. The PCs will each be given enough food and water to top each of them off at two weeks rations, with equal supplies for their mounts.

This scene occurs as the group settles in to their evening repast.

Note: This scene begins with Kelven getting injured. If the PCs have taken precautions that make this unfeasible, feel free to change the scene. One way or another, the assassination attempt occurs. Try to injure Kelven during this scene, but do not bend the rules to do so, especially if good planning and play on the part of the players would prevent it.

Note: This encounter can be used as a stopover without the assassination attempt if the game is running long. It is possible that you have already had two combat encounters so far, and there is another one (the duel) before the module ends. If you have less than 45 minutes of game time left, consider skipping the combat in this scene.

Also, this scene can be very deadly if the party is caught unaware. Read the scene carefully before running it and encourage the party to stay alert

(Aelfric will ask them to stay sharp while he prepares the horses, if nothing else).

The help here at the Trailbreak has been about what you would expect from a small town's sole roadside inn: slow but constant. The barmaid, Emly, is heading back and forth tending to your group and a band of ten rough-looking men, who are the only other patrons in evidence. A surly bartender sits mutely behind the bar giving drinks to Emly - he is also the cook, it appears, as he disappears back into the kitchen a lot. The food has fared well, however, with decent biscuits and excellent sausage.

Let the PCs interact with the bar help. The group of assassins has captured the real bar help, bound them, and put them in the root cellar. The PCs might be able to detect things wrong in their environment if they are wary.

Anyone speaking with Emly will need to succeed at a Sense Motive check (DC 25) to get a hunch something's wrong (and only allow this check if they ask for it). The bartender will not respond but in grunts and will head to the kitchen if bothered; if he's forced to interact with anyone a Sense Motive check at DC 22 indicates he's up to something.

A PC searching the bar for anything suspicious would need to make a Search check at DC 20 to find signs of a struggle - a bit of broken crockery, or a spot of blood, or the like. If asked, Emly will ascribe that to "a bar fight" - likely enough, but that generates another Sense Motive at DC 25 for those interacting with her to sense she's lying.

The thugs are more of a weak point—they're a rough and boisterous batch of bandits, and take advantage of the situation to ogle and bother Emly, the right-hand woman of the man that's hired them. They know they are supposed to wait until Emly signals them and then take out all the patrons—they don't know who the patrons are or why they're getting whacked, but they've been paid good coin. If interacted with, they'll act tough and tell people to "slag off". They can be persuaded to start a fight with the PCs early if they're bothered too much. Of course, this will just provide better cover for Emly to get in her first crack at Kelven.

Garhn, Emly, and the thugs are all detailed below, and their combat strategy is as follows (modified of course to react to what the party does). The three (if that many are still alive) Keoish diplomats are more than capable of defending themselves from the thugs in the following melee on a one on one basis, but they will be quickly overwhelmed without PC aid.

Tier 1 (EL 7)

This encounter does not change with the tiering, as the emphasis here is on preventing the assassination of Kelven, not an escalating battle.

Garhn, human male Rog5/Asn1: CR 6; Medium-sized Humanoids; HD 6d6+6; hp 24; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks +6 ranged (1d8+1/19-20 heavy crossbow), +3 melee (1d6/19-20, shortsword); SA Sneak attack +4d6, death attack; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge, (can't be flanked), poison use; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Move Silently +8, Hide +8, Disguise +5, Listen +4, Search +4, Jump +3, Ride +4, Bluff +2, Intimidate +4, Swim +2, Knowledge: Local (Keoland) +2; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (Heavy Crossbow), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

SA: Death Attack (Ex)—If the assassin studies his victim for 3 rounds and then makes a sneak attack with a melee weapon that successfully deals damage, the sneak attack has the additional effect of possibly either paralyzing or killing the target (assassin's choice). While studying the victim, the assassin can undertake other actions so long as his attention stays focused on the target and the target does not detect the assassin or recognize the assassin as an enemy. If the victim of such an attack fails her Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) against the killing effect, she dies. If the saving throw fails against the paralysis effect, the victim's mind and body become enervated, rendering her completely helpless and unable to act for 1d6+1 rounds. If the victim's saving throw succeeds, the attack is just a normal sneak attack. Once the assassin has completed the 3 rounds of study, he must make the death attack within the next 3 rounds. If a death attack is attempted and fails (the victim makes her save) or if the assassin does not launch the attack with 3 rounds of completing the study, 3 new rounds of study are required before he can attempt another death attack.

SQ: Poison Use (Ex)—Assassins are trained in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves when applying poison to a blade.

Spells Prepared (1; Spell DC = 11 + Spell Level): 1st—*spider climb*.

Equipment: Masterwork Heavy Crossbow, 20 quarrels (under counter), short sword, poison dagger (1d6 Con damage, DC 15).

Emly, human female Rog3: CR 3; Medium-sized Humanoids; HD 3d6+3; hp 14; Init +7 (Dex + feat); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks +3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger), +5 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, dagger), +4 ranged (1d2, thrown mug); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +6, Move Silently +6, Hide +6, Disguise +5, Listen +4, Search +4, Ride +4, Bluff +5, Disguise +6, Intimidate +4, Swim +2, Knowledge: Local (Keoland) +1, Pick Pocket +5, Disable Device +4, Open Lock +3; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (dagger), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Equipment: 3 daggers, mug (improvised thrown weapon (1d4, x2)).

Thugs, mixed male and female humans Rog1 (10): CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoids; HD 1d6+1; hp 6 each; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee, (1d6+2/19-20, shortsword); SA Sneak attack +1d6; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +2, Search +2, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Disguise +3, Open Lock +3, Disable Device +3, Pick Pocket +4, Intimidate +2; **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Equipment: Short swords, leather armor

As those who are so inclined eat, Aelfric leaves to tend to the horses for what will soon be the last, but longest, stretch of your journey: the King's Way.

If any PCs accompany Aelfric into the stables and poke around, they might find out that there are twelve, not ten, other horses in the stables and that they've all been ridden very hard today. If the PC and/or Aelfric head back immediately upon this discovery they'll get to the inn door on Round Two of the combat.

A road stretching over half the length of Keoland, the King's Way is regularly patrolled and sometimes touted as the safest thoroughfare in all the Flanaess.

One of the thugs wanders toward the door as if he's going out to the outhouse, but he stops at the door and slips the latch down. Allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 15) to see this (DC 5 for characters specifically watching the thugs). Breaking the door in from the outside will require a Strength check (DC 18) or chopping (hardness 5, hp 15). Opening it from the inside only takes a standard action, though it will provoke an attack of opportunity if the unlocker is threatened at the time.

At least, your Keoish envoys seem to think so. Mandaver (use a different name if he has not survived) has just finished informing you of this prideful fact when a cry interrupts him.

Glancing up, you see one of the rough-looking men on the other side of the bar has grabbed the barmaid roughly, and she struggles in his grip. All at once, the ten other patrons of the tavern draw weapons and rush you. So much for dinner...

This is a barroom brawl with a twist. Everyone here has been paid well to attack the party. No

one is to be left standing, though only Garhn the bartender has special orders. He is to kill Stephon Kelven. The thugs and his assistant Emly (the barmaid) are just to keep everyone else busy until he completes this task. Aelfric will get to the inn door on Round Four, as he hears the commotion on Round Two and was at the stables quite some distance away.

Surprise Round: Allow any PCs who were aware of the thug locking the door to roll initiative at this point.

Emly struggles with the thug (who she told before the party arrived to grab her when the action starts). She tries to break the grapple and he really tries to hold on, so this looks convincing.

Garhn hides behind the bar and begins to study Kelven. Anyone seeing him would need to make a Sense Motive vs DC 22 to indicate that he's scoping out Kelven—he tries to make it look like he's just worried about his bar and skin.

The thugs draw weapons and move over to attack—the one who locked the door attempts to make sure no one leaves that way. The movement takes their only action during the partial surprise round so they don't get to attack yet.

Round One: Garhn continues to study Kelven. The thug lets go of Emly to fight the party, and she retreats behind the nearest PC.

The thugs move in to fight the party, sneak attacking if possible (remember, anyone still flat-footed is subject to sneak attack, and they will also try to flank PCs as much as possible in the subsequent melee). One each attacks the three Keoish envoys while up to two gang up on each PC (obvious fighters and wizards first, with two moving to pummel Kelven unless somehow prevented). Keep in mind that there are 10 thugs total, so some PCs may have no one on them at all.

Round Two: Garhn finishes his study and prepares to assassinate Kelven with his poisoned dagger. Roll a Hide check for Garhn at +8; PCs specifically taking an action to look around for threats need to beat that on a Spot to detect him moving down and peering around the far end of the bar (you can go around it on either end). Emly throws a mug at one of the thugs to keep up the act (trying to really hit and do damage, she's not shy about hurting the hired help). She moves to where she's close to flanking several PCs in preparation for the next round.

The thugs will keep ganging up on PCs, surrounding them if possible. Once again, the number of thugs may leave several PCs free to act.

PCs that determined something was awry early in the stables get to the door now and can try to batter their way in.

Round Three: Garhn moves to Kelven and uses his Death Attack with a poisoned dagger if no one has attacked him by now. This will be a Sneak Attack vs. Kelven's AC of 10 if he's unaware of the threat. Any PC who has specifically stated that they are "not taking their eyes off Kelven" (or "off the barkeep") gets a Spot check vs. Garhn's Hide check to see him slipping behind Kelven at this time. If Garhn hits, Kelven must save against a DC 12 Fortitude Save or die - even if he succeeds, he takes damage from the dagger and possibly the poison (Poison: 1d6 Con initial and secondary, DC 15. Note that he has no other doses of this virulent poison on him, and the dose on the blade will evaporate in one hour.) plus 3d6 from the Sneak Attack.

Emly flanks a PC if possible and sneak attacks them.

The thugs continue their gang rush tactics, but will flee if their number is reduced to 4 or fewer. If fleeing is not an option, they surrender.

Round Four: Garhn moves back behind the bar (1/2 cover) and grabs his heavy crossbow from underneath it. If Kelven is still up, he will shoot him with it. Otherwise, he tries to go out the kitchen door, and will shoot anyone in his way.

If possible, Emly flees with Garhn out the back of the inn. Otherwise, she continues to fight as interference. Emly will fight to clear the way for him if she can, but she will surrender if Garhn hasn't killed Kelven by the beginning of round five.

Aelfric reaches the inn door and tries to break in (DC 18), weapon in hand. As soon as the Freeknight arrives on the scene, every thug present immediately surrenders, as does Emly. Garhn will turn his dagger on himself if Kelven is not dead and he can't escape. (Assume that he voluntarily coup de graces himself and is killed immediately).

Round Five: Emly surrenders or flees regardless of what's going on. Aelfric continues to attempt to gain entry. The fight continues until the Freeknight gets in or Garhn is slain.

Aelfric, furious as he is, is honor bound to accept surrender from these assassins and will try to subdue any PC who is still fighting, after asking them to stand down first.

At the end of this scene, a number of things can occur. If Kelven is dead, the adventure essentially ends. Wrap up as you see fit and move to the Achievement Summary.

If Kelven is alive but the Keoish diplomats are dead, the ambassador will press on sullenly, insisting that the envoys be taken to Niole Dra for noble and proper burial.

If Kelven and at least one diplomat survive, the mission continues mostly uninterrupted. Of course, if any of the Keoish envoys dies, the survivors will not be pleasant company (although the Threels would not miss Mandaver too much).

The thugs and Emly can only tell PCs what little they know. Garhn handled all of the arrangements; even Emly has no idea who hired them to attack the party. Only Garhn has that knowledge and he may not be up to questions.

If he is, Garhn will prove resistant to interrogation. An Intimidate (DC 16) check or Diplomacy (DC 20) will be necessary to get the following from him:

He works for a guild he refuses to name. Others will surely succeed where he has failed. (Detect Thoughts will be able to get the guild's name, 'Ule Nadrath', which is Suloise for 'Night Terrors'.) Questions on this topic will get nothing more, and he can not be intimidated into revealing more as he would truly rather die than betray the guild.

He suspects the identity of his employer, but he can not be certain. He does not mind hazarding a guess, especially as he figures his captors will assume he is lying. He will name the Baronet Hautemaruae. Anyone with Knowledge: Local (Keoland) will know the name as one of many discontent nobles who wield next to no power in Keoland. If no PC knows this, one of the Keoish envoys will volunteer the information, along with an utter dismissal of the man.

The real inn staff, innkeeper Godobald and barmaid Berna, as well as regular patron Notker, are found in the cellar, alive but bound. The thugs came in and beat them into submission, robbed them, and put them there.

The scene essentially ends here. Aelfric insists on leaving immediately before the assassins' backup can arrive. Local constables can be called to deal with what is left, though the envoys will authorize any who wish to with the power of execution. These commoners have lost whatever rights they might have had for attacking nobles of the Court.

If the party express displeasure with the idea, Aelfric will refrain *unless* Kelven was dropped below 0 hit points. In that case, he will remove the prisoners to a private room and execute them himself, as is his right. Keoland recognizes the rank of a Freeknight and affords them the privileges of knighthood while on Keoish soil.

The freed inn staff is happy to keep an eye on any prisoners until the constabulary arrives, and assure the group that they will testify against the assassins.

Once this clean-up is finished, however it plays out, move to Scene Three, which takes place several hard hours' ride later...

Scene Three: Unmarked Hazard

Once again, this scene has a single figure standing in the road. PCs may be tempted to run him down or accost him before he can make his intentions clear. Be sure to remind them that doing so without just cause is an illegal act and punishable in Keoland by penalties up to and including death.

Still, the PCs should be rewarded for being cautious. In this case, let anyone who thinks to ride ahead find (and possibly interact with) Nelford Devreaux before the carriage arrives.

Kelven, shaky but alive, has murmured several thanks for your timely rescue during the hours of shuddering carriage ride away from Ienolde. Three (reduce if needed) Keoish voices gratefully join his in that regard.

You are another day closer to Niole Dra, and an hour or two from being forced to camp by nightfall and fatigue. Aelfric has been pressing for faster travel though, and the driver of the carriage has offered no argument at all. Fortunately, the paved road you are on, The King's Way, has made the going easier.

Weary but wary, no one is particularly surprised when the coach comes to an abrupt halt. "You there, out of the damned road!" snaps Aelfric angrily.

Ahead of you, in the path of the wagon, stands a man in dark clothes. His green eyes sparkle in the evening light as he speaks. "Gladly, good sir knight, once my business is done."

PCs may interrupt here (or, of course, at any time). If they do, Nelford will fight them, though he does call out, "One at a time, fellows, as is only sporting!" Aelfric will not engage the man, but he won't stop the party from doing so. He will note any PC who agrees to the 'one at a time' fight as well.

If the PCs do not interrupt:

"What bloody business brings you out so late and makes us even later?" answers the Freeknight.

A coy smile creases the lips of the man before you. "Bloody business indeed, sir. I call out Stephon Kelven of Kelzad, call him out to do honor in a duel to the death." As he speaks, he lays one hand on the worked hilt of the rapier at his side. "As is the law."

Once again, the PCs may try to interfere. Before, Aelfric would have been annoyed, but he would understand their temper and fear of an ambush. Now, however, his hands are tied. Dueling is legal, both in the Yeomanry and in Keoland. Interfering with a duel once announced is a serious crime. He moves to stop any PCs that try to do so.

From here, Aelfric will scowl and ride back to confer with Stephon. Any surviving Keoish envoys will be visibly dismayed at this turn of events. Kelven is no fighter and the man in the roadway obviously is. Also, Stephon is likely to be already wounded. Luckily, there is an option.

Both countries also allow a legal champion. Unfortunately, Aelfric can not serve as one. He cannot engage in duels unless the opponent is also a knight. It is fairly obvious, at least to him, that this scoundrel is no knight. Thus, it is up to the PCs to volunteer one of their number as

champion. Aelfric will inform them of the Champion law, but no one will ask them to volunteer.

If no one steps forward, Kelven will accept the challenge. He cannot decline, as his mission is dependent on his reputation being stainless. Backing down to a ruffian in the street would be disastrous.

If he does agree, while he is preparing to fight, Argenel (or his brother, if Argenel is dead) will call PCs who seem roguish aside and mention that if the duelist were to 'have an accident *right now*', the Keoish envoys would happily forget he ever existed.

Of course, Aelfric will be disgusted if the party attacks Nelford, but it may be the only way to save Kelven should no one volunteer to fight in his stead. Aelfric will not fight to save Nelford, but he will be extremely disappointed in them. Kelven will refuse to speak to anyone who engages in such a base attack, since he has a fairly strong sense of personal honor as well. Still, PCs may opt for this plan.

It is also technically illegal for either duelist to be magically enhanced by someone other than himself - however, the PCs may well choose to do this, and the Keoish will turn a blind eye to it.

One way or another, someone is probably going to fight Nelford. Run the combat depending on the circumstances, and then check below to determine the scene's outcome.

Tier 1 (EL 3)

Nelford Devreaux, human male Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 3d10; hp 22; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather); Atks +7 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), or +4 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword), or +5 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier) and +2 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Ride +4, Bluff +2, Intimidate +2, Diplomacy +2; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (rapier), Two Weapon Fighting, Ambidexterity, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Improved Initiative.

Equipment: Rapier, short sword, leather armor, noble's outfit.

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Nelford Devreaux, human male Ftr5: CR 5; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 5d10; hp 35; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative) Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 leather); Atks +10 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), or +7 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword), or +8 (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), and +5 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +1, Ride +4, Bluff +4, Intimidate +4, Diplomacy +4; **Feats:** Weapon

Focus (rapier), Two Weapon Fighting, Ambidexterity, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (short sword)

Equipment: Rapier, short sword, leather armor, noble's outfit.

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Nelford Devreaux, human male Ftr7: CR 7; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 7d10; hp 48; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 leather); Atks +12/+7 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), or +9/+4 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword), or +10/+5 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), and +7 melee (1d6+1, crit: 19-20, short sword); AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +3, Ride +4, Bluff +6, Intimidate +4, Diplomacy +5

Feats: Weapon Focus (rapier), Two Weapon Fighting, Ambidexterity, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword), Expertise

Equipment: Rapier, short sword, studded leather armor, noble's outfit

If one of the PCs fights fairly with Devreaux, if Devreaux wins by taking the PC to zero or fewer hit points he will spare the PC's life and let his or her comrades render aid. He will then retreat from the field of battle if allowed. This earns Aelfric's Favor for the dueling PC and any PC whom vocally or visibly allows the surrender.

If the PC actually gets Devreaux to 3 hp or less, he will surrender and ask for his life. Accepting this surrender will earn Aelfric's favor and the Contact: Nelford Devreaux certificate.

Allowing Kelven to fight Devreaux is suicide for the ambassador. Run the combat, but Kelven has very little chance of defeating Nelford. If it does occur, the duelist surrenders as above and Kelven allows it. Unfortunately, Nelford does not spare Kelven if the ambassador loses. The adventure ends here, within a day's ride of Niole Dra.

Attacking Nelford en masse will earn neither of these, but will save Kelven's life (but lose Aelfric's favor for those PCs involved).

If the adventure can proceed from here, continue to the last chapter, Destination at Long Last.

Chapter Four: Destination at Long Last

A day after the dueling encounter, the party arrives at Niole Dra. The scene below is the finishing scene of the game, but it leaves off with the party in the House of Lords, facing an angry group of nobles and a very disappointed King.

See the Conclusion section for more details.

Scene One: The Court of Lords

Arriving in Niole Dra has been a whirlwind of ceremony and fancy dress. The entire city seems like the best part of Longspear, with wealth hanging from every gable and fine folk on every street corner. For those raised in country homes, the spectacle of Keoland's royal city can be a little overwhelming.

Not that you've had time to bear it much witness. Within an hour of your arrival, you were greeted by a throng on officials with titles longer than their names. Or maybe the titles were their names.

The rush of passing time slowed down a bit as you were shown to rooms and given time to freshen up. The grand meeting Stephon came all this way for was immediately scheduled for this evening and the ambassador insisted on your accompaniment.

Let anyone who wishes to discuss security plans or other preparations do so now. Although there are no further threats in this adventure, the players need not know that. In fact, they should rightly be more paranoid now than ever. Making it to Niole Dra only means that all the obvious hazards are behind them.

Have Kelven meet with the PCs and talk with them, expressing his gratitude for their continued good service. If any payment was negotiated for their escort, he pays them in full now, offering a 100 gp bonus each for all the trouble they've experienced.

Aelfric will also speak, letting the PCs know how he feels about their conduct and performance. Depending on his opinions (which he will express, for good or ill, quite honestly), one or more PCs make receive the Commendation of the Freeknights certificate at this time. PCs acting dishonorably during the adventure will not gain this cert, but PCs performing brave and Lawful actions like fairly championing Kelven in the duel will. Once he is finished speaking, Kelven will gather the PCs and head to his meeting with the assembled Court of Keoland.

Now, you find yourselves seated around a table reserved for 'honored guests of the nation of Keoland'. Beside you, Aelfric stands behind the regal looking chair granted to your charge, Stephon Kelven. He looks resplendent, ivory and black clothes accented with enough red to set off the proud medallion on his chest, unabashedly displaying the crest of the Yeomanry.

The reactions of the court around you are that of guarded disdain. Having looked around, the sheer majesty of the Keoland Court becomes breathtakingly apparent.

Above you, images of conquest and glory play over the vaulted ceiling. Marble columns extend down on all sides, dividing the chamber into

several sub-rooms, each backdropped by a magnificent tapestry. These lavish works show the coat of arms belonging, you assume, to the nobles in these chambers. Each nook holds a half dozen people, all looking right at you.

None of this compares to what lies at one end of this spectacular scene. On a dais of alternating red and tawny marble rests a golden throne, its arm rests and high reaching back carved to resemble great hunting cats. Seated here is the King of all Keoland, Kimbertos Skotti, the Lion Monarch.

Give the players a chance to interject reactions and questions. They are not close enough to any of the Keoish nobles to ask anything directly, but Stephon will try to field any queries to the best of his ability. If asked what he intends to do here, he will just smile and ask the PC to wait 'just a little bit more'.

With a resounding crack of his bronze and vermilion scepter, King Skotti renders the hall silent. Then, rising, he speaks in a clear and resounding voice.

"Attend to my words, honored Court... honored guests. Some months ago, we extended an offer to the now sovereign state of the Yeomanry an offer to rejoin us here in our House."

With that, he gestures to a single darkened section of the chamber. Two pages bring forth burning tapers and set alight tallow candles in a pair of candelabra. The radiance fills the empty alcove, illuminating a vacant table and a bare back wall, devoid of tapestry or marking.

"We have long awaited this day, when our friends and allies in the Yeomanry take back what is rightfully theirs." He gestures again and one of the pages cuts a tether against the back wall.

A bolt of cloth unrolls from the ceiling, displaying a heraldic device like all the others in the Hall. This one is of a single red spear on a field of argent. A scroll device below the arrow reads, "Pride, Unity, and Virtue". The appearance of the crest causes some quiet commotion around the room.

It ceases when the king speaks again. "Approach, Stephon Kelven of the Yeomanry. Accept your ennoblement by my hand and return to the place set for the nobles of your land." One hand draws forth a gleaming blade from its sheath beside the throne.

Kelven rises, sparing a single glance to Aelfric. The Freeknight looks resigned, but smiles at his friend. Then, "Good King Skotti, Nobles of the Court... I must decline your gracious offer."

Let the PCs react as they wish, but press on as Kelven only pauses for a moment.

The Court falls silent, a stunned quiet settling over the assembly. Before it can erupt in a fervor of outrage, the ambassador speaks again. "My

country draws its strength from independence and freedom. To give these up, even to a good and gracious sovereign like yourself, would undermine everything we have; everything we are."

He glances around the room, pausing before he continues. Disbelief and anger seem a fairly even mix on the faces of the Nobles of the Court. The King himself, oddly, just looks... tired.

"The Freeholder and the Grosspokesmen all value our good relations with the fair country of Keoland, but we can not return as vassals or as a colony. In this, we respectfully decline."

He smiles warmly, defying the gazes of indignation around him. At the doors, palace guards seem a great deal more at attention, their weapons fully at the ready. Aelfric sighs deeply, as if preparing for the battle it might take to get out of here.

"That said, King and gracious Nobles, we wish to make an offer of our own, if you will hear it."

All eyes turn from Kelven to the King. Skotti seems to momentarily flinch from the attention, but he recovers quickly. In a voice that does not bother to hide what sounds like disappointment, he says, "We will hear what our ally has to say."

Cries from the floor of 'Out of order!' and 'Improper form!' are ignored by the Crown. "Speak," the King commands.

Stephon bows gratefully. "Your majesty's offer does us much honor and we considered the matter carefully before coming to this decision. In these deliberations, we came to realize the value we place on our relationship with Keoland."

Breathing deeply, you can tell he is coming to the heart of the proposal. "The Council would like to extend my services to Keoland as Ambassador of the Yeomanry, to aid and advise the Crown as he sees fit as a member of the Council of Niole Dra."

"They would further like to make such a position available on the Council of Common Grosspokesmen for any representative your Majesty would care to appoint. This post would allow for an embassy in Loftwick proper, with rights and privilege to be determined."

With another gracious bow, Kelven asks, "What say the Crown?"

The Crown does not immediately answer, but the sheer volume of noise from the furious voices of a hundred nobles would have drowned him out anyway. Aelfric looks down, shaking his head.

As the court erupts in outrage, Kelven smiles down to you. "Welcome to politics," he says, almost apologetically...

The scene technically ends here, with the decision of the Council delivered to the Court of Niole Dra. Refer to the Conclusion section below for ways to wrap up the scenario. Then, move to the Experience and Treasure Summaries to finish the game.

Conclusion

This is part one of a two-part adventure. The second half is a Keoland-Yeomanry regional adventure and should be available at the same time as this one. Thus, players should be able to move from this game to that one without incident.

If this is not the case, some additional play may be needed to provide an in-game reason for their characters to have extricated themselves from what could be a dire predicament. Being alone in Niolo Dra with the entire ruling class against you is not a good position to be in.

Two options are available. One, you can ask players to suspend play with these particular characters until such time as the second half of the adventure becomes available. This is not desirable, but some players may wish to do so. If so, they may.

Two, you can take ten or twenty minutes to describe for the players how Aelfric and Kelven manage to get them out of the city on a merchant caravan bound for Longspear. You can run this as detailed as you like, given the amount of time you may have left in the play slot. This gives some (vague, admittedly) sense of closure. Again, this is not desirable, but for those who do not wish to suspend play with their character, it is an option.

Hopefully, the second half of the adventure will be available for play and neither of these will have to occur. In that case, you won't have to make any of these choices. Still, doing so is the nature of balancing game mechanics with the realities of convention gaming. As Kelven just told the PCs, "Welcome to politics."

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter One

Defeating the ambush of
townsfolk on the road from Fort Baxter 50 xp

Encounter Three

Defeating the Dreadwood Lizardfolk 100 xp

Saving Kelven from the assassination
attempt. 50 xp

Defeating all the assassins 100 xp

If the party attacks en masse and defeats
Nelford Devreaux, the
duelist on the King's Way 25 xp

-or-

The party behaves honorably and one of
the party accepts the challenge 25 xp

Special Individual Award for the PC who
accepts the duelists challenge and wins 50 xp

Conclusion

If each of these NPCs survives the adventure:

Argenel Threel 25 xp

Kashnel Threel 25 xp

Mandaver Oshlake 25 xp

Stephon Kelven 50 xp

Total Experience for Objectives: 450* xp

Role-playing Experience: 0-50 xp

Total Possible Experience: 500* xp

*550 xp possible for the PC who defeats
the duelist.

Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g. armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than 250 gp that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-

decided penalties for being known as a thief. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things which it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Encounter One

- One courtier's outfit per PC: 30 gp
 - Payment for escort to Longspear per PC: 50 gp
- Additional equipment per PC: up to 50 gp

Encounter Two

- Payment for escort to Niole Dra per PC: 50 gp

Encounter Three

- Masterwork heavy mace (312 gp, 12 lb, steel, common): Wrought of a single piece of black stone, this mace has been carved to resemble seven wicked claws extending from a draconic forearm. The grip is decorated with chips of polished malachite.
- Masterwork heavy crossbow (350 gp, 9 lb, steel and wood, common): This fine oak and bronze-fitted crossbow was made in Shalehal by a master bowyer.

Encounter Four

- Pay bonus per PC: 50 gp
- Contact – Nelford Devreaux: Having impressed one of the foremost duelists in Niole Dra, the PC named above can attempt to use Nelford as a contact when in the royal city of Keoland. Devreaux is a well-informed man who has many connections throughout the city.
Your PC may use Nelford to add a +3 insight bonus to three Gather Information checks in Niole Dra.
- Commendation of the Freeknights: The PC named above has gained the attention of Freeknight Aelfric Aelfstead for his/her brave and noble actions during this adventure. The player may use this favor as an Influence Point with the Freeknights.

DM's Handout 1: Longspear

Longspear: City of the Yeomanry

Overview: Longspear is a small-to-medium-size walled city located on the eastern frontier of the Yeomanry, near the Keoish border. It sits on a relatively flat plain on the banks of the mighty Javan River to the east. On its other three sides, Longspear is surrounded by the Little Hills, referred to as "little" only to the comparative size of the nearby Jotens. Longspear is protected by a thick stone wall some 20 feet in height that is interrupted by even higher towers at regular intervals. There are two primary gates that provide entrance into the city (although construction of a third is being planned), and each of these is protected by high towers, heavy portculli, and well-armed soldiers. A towering citadel overlooks the city on a high hill to the northeast. Longspear serves as the primary port for the Yeomanry and is the headquarters for the Yeoman navy, which is a small but formidable force that patrols the Yeomanry's border along the river.

Despite its formidable appearance, however, Longspear is a relatively friendly and open city. It rests at the crossroads of two active trade routes, and merchants from all directions make Longspear a regular stop. As such, the city is dependent upon trade for much of its prosperity. The first route is overland, from Loftwick into Keoland and points beyond. The second trade route is north-south via the Javan River, which is both wide and navigable as it passes by the city. Merchants bring their wares southward from Cryllor through the Hold of the Sea Princes and to ports beyond the Azure Sea. Recent political unrest to the south has slowed this commerce down somewhat in recent years, however. Due to its strategic location, Longspear has become a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and beliefs. However, such activity makes the city difficult to control at times, and it has a much "wilder" reputation (and rightly so) than the capital, Loftwick, which is almost antiseptic in comparison.

History: Longspear was not always such a bustling town. In fact, before Yeoman independence, Longspear was little more than a small fishing village with no strategic importance. However, independence created an eastern frontier in the Yeomanry that was susceptible to attack. While the Yeomanry was protected by natural barriers to the north, south, and west, there was little, save the river, to prevent a hostile force from approaching from the east. It was decided by the council that Longspear, the only sizeable settlement in the region, be fortified and serve as a sort of 'gateway' into the Yeomanry from the east. The town thus was walled, and a citadel was built outside those walls to protect its citizens.

The threat of invasion brought many citizens in the surrounding towns and villages to Longspear for the relative safety that came with the city's walls and the soldiers protecting it. By 400 CY, the population of Longspear had grown from 600 to nearly 4,000, and the existing city walls no longer could hold the people. Sprawling, chaotic neighborhoods sprung up almost overnight around the walls, and by 450 CY the buildings inside Longspear's walls became Old Town, while the area immediately outside the walls was christened New Town. Old Town was a place for the older, more established, more orderly parts of Longspear society, while New Town was a wilder place that served as a home for the city's "new guard." The city's population settled at around 5,500 and remained as such for many years. However, in the last decade, the city has experienced tremendous growth again, due primarily to the unrest within the Hold of the Sea Princes and to the chaos in the surrounding lands that brought a number of new refugees to the Yeomanry and Longspear in particular.

Population: According to current tax roles, Longspear has a population of about 7,700 citizens, and that population grows daily as refugees come in from the south. In fact, at its current pace of growth, Longspear will surpass Loftwick as the largest city in the Yeomanry in only a few short years. Unlike Loftwick, which is primarily human, Longspear serves as the home for a number of different races. Of its 7,700 residents, some 1,500 are dwarves, about 1,000 are halflings, and there are small numbers of gnomes and elves scattered about. There are also a number of half elves in Longspear, many of whom have migrated west from the Dreadwood.

Commerce: As stated earlier, one of the primary sources of income for the city is trade. Merchant trains and caravans from numerous regions, including Keoland, Dreadwood, and Loftwick, sell their wares within the city walls. However, the lands surrounding Longspear are rich in resources, and as the city has grown, its people have been more able to utilize those resources. The Javan River is very fertile and provides an abundant source of fresh fish both for local consumption and for export. Areas of the Little Hills to the south and west are rich in minerals, including iron, silver, and semi-precious gems such as Onyx, Zircon, Quartz, and the occasional Amethyst. A number of dwarven families that live in and around Longspear are the primary miners of these minerals, and they have grown quite wealthy as a result.

The relatively warm, humid climate in and around Longspear is ideally suited for the growing of cotton, and there is no shortage of cotton farmers in the region. Not surprisingly, there is also a

relatively high concentration of weavers within Longspear who convert the raw cotton into beautiful cloth that is in high demand throughout the region. As a result, the weaver's guild is one of the most powerful and influential guilds in the city.

Government: While the Yeomanry as a whole is considered to be a representative democracy, government within Longspear itself is somewhat less organized. The arms-bearing citizens of the city elect a spokesman who represents them in the Yeomanry League in Loftwick, and it is his responsibility to espouse the wants and needs of the city to the League. The city also has a mayor who is elected by all landowners within the city. He is in charge of overseeing the city's internal affairs, armed forces operations, the paying of taxes, and maintaining other city services. However, in Longspear, the mayor is a mere figurehead with little real power. He is a mere personality that the people of the city can identify with. Instead, city operations are dominated by an unusually strong and well-organized guild system--a rarity in a small city. Loftwick and the Yeomanry League tolerate the existence of the guild system in Longspear for the simple fact that it works--the city is prospering and its people are happy. While it is true that many of the more influential guild members are self-interested, a majority of them truly care about the success of the city and its people.

Armed Forces: Longspear maintains a garrison of approximately 600 soldiers that can be doubled in times of great need. The soldiers are divided into two groups: The Watch, which patrols Longspear's streets, and The Riders, who guard the city's environs. A typical Watch patrol consists of 10 men armed with chainmail, shields, spears, and crossbows, including a sergeant. A Rider patrol is similarly armed (albeit mounted on light warhorses) and usually accompanied by a wizard. Riders are well renowned for their ability to fire their crossbows accurately while in full gallop, and the garrison stables are stocked with some of the fastest horses that money can buy. There is much rivalry (most of it friendly) between the Watch and the Riders. However, when the city is threatened, both the Watch and the Riders unify their forces to thwart the common enemy.

DM's Handout 2: Major NPCs

Stephon Kelven, male human Ari5: CR 4; Medium-sized Human; HD 5d8; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier); AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +8.

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +8, Ride +4, Bluff +6, Innuendo +5, Diplomacy +8, Sense Motive +5; **Feats:** Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Iron Will, Expertise

Equipment: Rapier, noble's outfit, signet ring

Stephon Kelven is a well-trained diplomat hailing from the city of Loftwick. His skills make him perfectly suited to partake this mission on behalf of the Council of Grosspokesmen and the Freeholder.

His ability to keep secrets and perform under 'trying' circumstances, as well as his personal friendship with the Freeknight Aelfric Aelfstead, were the deciding factor to selecting him.

A man of means and landed family (the lands earned not through blood but through honest service to the Yeomanry on and off the field of battle), Kelven is dedicated to performing his duties to the best of his ability. Though he demands the same from those who accompany him, he also believes in fair reward and open praise.

Aelfric Aelfstead male elf Ftr6, Freeknight 3: CR 9; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 9d10; hp 48; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 21 (+3 Dex, +5 breastplate, +2 large steel shield); Atks +14/+9 melee (1d8+6/17-20, longsword), or +11/+6 melee (1d8+2/x3 longspear) or +12 ranged (1d8/19-20 light crossbow); AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +4.

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +4, Ride +12, Intimidate +4, Diplomacy +2, Handle Animal +6, Heal +5; **Feats:** Weapon Focus (longsword), Alertness, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Dodge, Cleave, Mobility, Weapon Specialization (longsword), Great Cleave (from prestige), Iron Will (from prestige), Expertise (from prestige), Improved Critical (longsword)

Equipment: Masterwork breastplate, longsword +2, special mount (light warhorse "Alnaythil", meaning 'starred brow' in elven, with a +2 Hit Dice, a +4 Natural armor bonus, and +1 to Str because of prestige class), masterwork large steel shield, longspear, light crossbow, 20 bolts.

Aelfric Aelfstead is a rare form of Yeomanry warrior, an elf sworn to uphold the laws of the land as one of its Freeknights. Aelfric has trained since childhood for the honor of wearing the red and white cloak of a Freeknight and takes his role as one very seriously.

After saving Stephon Kelven from an angry mob during a food shortage dispute in Emberton a few years ago, the two have maintained a strong friendship. Aelfric sees Kelven as the charismatic soul he wishes he could be, taking great pleasure in watching his friend negotiate and carry on at social functions. He does, however, feel that there is a time for talk and a time for steel.

Entrusted with Kelven's safety during this dangerous mission, Aelfric will lay down his life if necessary to see his friend (and his honor) go unharmed. Others traveling with him who show the same dedication will earn great respect from him by doing so.

Argenel and Kashnel Threel male human Ari3: CR 2; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 18; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks +2 melee (1d6/19-20, shortsword); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +5, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +5, Ride +4, Bluff +6, Innuendo +5, Diplomacy +4, Sense Motive +5; **Feats:** Skill Focus (Bluff), Alertness, Expertise.

Equipment: short sword, noble's outfit, signet ring.

These brothers are minor nobles in the Court of Nirole Dra. By manipulating favors owed them by higher members of the court, they arranged to become part of the entourage sent to Longspear. They both see this assignment as a way to raise their importance in the eyes of their peers. Argenel is a little more vicious than his brother, and not above doing 'whatever needs to be done' to see this mission conclude safely in Nirole Dra.

Mandaver Oshlake, male human Ari5: Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 5d8+5; hp 36; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +8.

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +2, Listen +4, Search +4, Knowledge: Nobility +8, Ride +4, Bluff +6, Innuendo +5, Diplomacy +8, Sense Motive +5; **Feats:** Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Toughness, Expertise

Equipment: Rapier, noble's outfit, signet ring

Mandaver Oshlake, 'of the Nirole Dra Oshlakes', is a consummate court manipulator. After arranging to have the rest of his escort comprised of obvious inferiors, he made several promises to the Inner Court and the King that he would 'personally' see the Yeoman Ambassador safely to his proper place in the royal city. These promises have made him look very good, but if he doesn't deliver, the damage to his reputation will be severe.